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# POSITIONAL STRATEGY

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# INTRODUCTION

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With a geographical spread over more than seventy countries, global vineyard surface area amount to 7.4 million hectares and wine production to 260 million hectolitres in 2019<sup>1</sup>. Even countries like Denmark are producing wine today as increasing global temperatures are redefying the boundaries of viticulture. Still, Spain, Italy and France dominate the global wine trade, accounting for around 50% of total wine production. The former the largest vine growing country with 969 thousand hectares, Italy the highest wine producer with 54.8 million hectolitres and France the main wine exporter in value at 7.8 billion euros.

While these traditional European wine producing countries have a higher per capita wine consumption, the US is the biggest wine market, followed by France, Italy and Germany. Changing wine consumption in developing markets also see China surpassing the established UK market, indicating the dynamic and increasingly competitive nature of the wine industry. Wine is therefore no longer only consumed locally, but traded worldwide with many challenges.

Across this global supply chain, the wine industry has a major economic impact, generating employment opportunities in wine growing and production, research and development, sales and operations, trade and retailing, education and tourism. With fast growing technology and social media, the wine sector has also benefitted from innovative ideas and services to help spur the economic growth. In France alone, the wine industry generates almost 600 thousand jobs, contributing to 15% of agricultural revenue while only using 3% of arable land<sup>2</sup>.

As the wine industry is expanding, it creates an opportunity to offer a wide range of educational courses and qualifications. WSET, a leading body organizing wine education courses since the 1950s, has recorded a substantial rise in student admissions, with a record high in 2019<sup>3</sup>. There is certainly a market to explore, seeking wine-related knowledge. Still, “uncorking” such an opportunity requires a strategic position with a unique academic proposition to find success and could even act as a flagship study programme to attract international collaboration.

<sup>1</sup><http://www.oiv.int/en/oiv-life/current-situation-of-the-vitivinicultural-sector-at-a-global-level>

<sup>2</sup><https://www.vinetsociete.fr/chiffres-cles>

<sup>3</sup><https://www.wsetglobal.com/news-events/news/2019/wset-reports-record-annual-candidate-figures-in-50th-year>





# POSITIONAL STRATEGY

The International Vintage Master seeks to place emphasis on the fact that the wine industry has three main areas of activity:

- Grape growing: All aspects related to the viticultural system, from site selection and planning to vineyard management and decision making.
- Winemaking: All processes involved in wine production, from berry ripening and harvest assessment to post fermentation practices and sensory evaluation.
- Wine management: All issues addressing the cultural, social, economic and ecological values of business sustainability.

By dedicating one semester to each area of activity, students will hold an understanding of grape growing and winemaking, with key insights in wine business management. Knowledge of the supply chain, from soil to consumer, is critical in the wine sector, allowing students to be familiar with the various elements throughout the chain, regardless of future positions they will fill.

The general objective is to make sure students acquire in-depth scientific knowledge and hands-on application skills to succeed.

Consistent with this framework, the academic content is strategically centred on the terroir concept, which forms a vital part of the wine industry, receiving international status in 2010<sup>1</sup>. It can be defined as a well-defined bounded area where natural and constructed local (social, historical and cultural) resources give place to a product with an embedded identity. However, the terroir concept represents so much more and should be seen as a productive and localized cultural system, creating economic, ecological and social value within its territorial setting.

Terroir as a concept develops a sense of place, where winegrowers establish a wine displaying the embedded identity of the bounded area, by exploiting natural resources and sharing a common heritage and socially constructed skills. By using the terroir concept, winegrowers have a product-driven culture, focusing on its underlying attributes (both tangible and intangible) to differentiate in a competing market. To that end, the objective is producing the highest possible quality wine with distinct characteristics according to the local identity and cultural heritage of the territory.

<sup>1</sup>The International Organization of Vine and Wine defines terroir as “an area in which collective knowledge of the interactions between the identifiable physical and biological environment and applied vitivinicultural practices develops, providing distinctive characteristics for the products originating from this area”

## TERROIR & TYPICALITY

They are two inseparable concepts when discussing the link between a wine and its place of origin. While terroir is crucial to the understanding of quality wines, the concept of typicality expresses the degree to which a wine reflects its geographical origin. Investigated through sensory analysis, typicality refers to the most familiar representation of a wine, as a function of its geographical origin. To that end, typicality does not seek uniformity, but rather that wines from a similar terroir bore an identifiable family resemblance with notable characteristics.





As a product-driven strategy starts in the vineyard and cellar, the teaching curriculum of the first-year focus on the various components and their interactions that shape a terroir wine

### Semester 1: Wine Quality

Wine quality as winegrowers should meet the standard of making quality wines and pursue to establish a product(s) with a strong and embedded identity.

### Semester 2: Sustainable viticulture

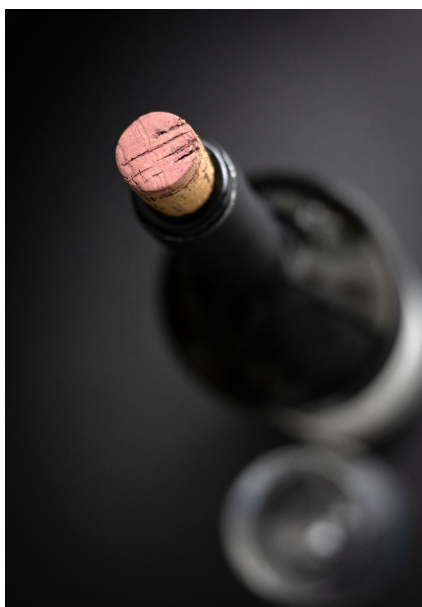
Sustainable viticulture as grape production should ensure economic growth and preserve the cultural and ecological values of the territorial landscape.



A terroir product-driven winery creates distinctiveness with high quality wines, featuring uniqueness, while developing differentiation with specific socio-ecological strategies. Still, these wineries face the challenge of building reputation, as they are trading globally, where target consumers may not be familiar with a location. The third semester places emphasis on these perspectives as wineries are looking for sustained distinctiveness and differentiation

### Semester 3: Wine Identity

Wine Identity as a strong product-driven brand should ensure sales, attract novel consumers and generate loyalty in a competitive global wine market.





By definition, the terroir concept has the potential to develop in each wine growing area of the world, enabling the production of great wines. However, as wineries engage in a terroir approach focusing on the product, rather than serving the consumer, it is important to construct a place brand with other winegrowers sharing similar characteristics. As perceived wine quality and willingness to buy are shaped by product reputation, a collective brand should facilitate place identity by covering a larger share of the market.

Such a brand would ensure greater perceived quality, resulting in a higher price to pay, than individual brands, especially for small to medium sized firms. It has an umbrella effect with economic and non-economic benefits beyond those of a single company, allowing for the regional development of the embedded territory. By managing terroir as a concept in a wine business, the challenge as well as the opportunity here is to teach students the management and branding strategies of terroir wines, serving as a competitive advantage. Students will also be introduced to the areas of entrepreneurship.





The courses take place in three different countries, where local wineries engage in a product-driven culture to elaborate wines with a distinct place identity. The first semester takes place in Portugal (UTAD, Vila Real), in the historical region of the Douro Valley, the second semester in Italy (UCSC, Piacenza), strategically placed close to the wine regions of Piedmont and Veneto, and the third semester in France (ESA, Angers), in the heart of the Loire Valley. At the end of each first-year semester, students are strongly encouraged to gain practical experiences, where winter and summer optional internships are available. First- and second-year courses also includes technical visits and study trips to wine producing areas, allowing students to further learn about wine diversity and identity. To broaden students' reach and understanding of wines, a key element of the third semester is the WSET level 3 award in wines, exposing students to products from all over the world. Here students should be capable of drawing conclusions on the various components that shape product quality and typicality.



First Academic Year

Second Academic Year

Semester 1  
Sep.-Dec.  
**Wine Quality**

**Vila Real, Portugal**  
*Location*

Semester 2  
Feb.-Jun.  
**Sustainable Viticulture**

**Piacenza, Italy**  
*Location*

Semester 3  
Oct.-Feb.  
**Wine Identity**

**Angers, France**  
*Location*

Semester 4  
Mar.-Sep.  
**Master Thesis**

**Worldwide**  
*Location*

During the fourth and final semester, taking place in any country of choice, students will apply their academic knowledge and skills to their master thesis projects. The aim is to apply the concepts, tools and methodologies taught in the first three semesters. This exposure and experience gained in real life situations will empower them to be successful and address the various challenges and issues that await them after graduation. They will learn to be more autonomous and responsible, develop skills and gain knowledge in the field of interest and obtain a specialization for specific tasks or professions.

## WHAT'S IN A NAME?

MSc Vintage

Master in Vine, wINe and Terroir manAGEMENT



**MORE INFO**

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